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Senate

The Senate was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, May 30, 2014, at 2 p.m.

House of Representatives

THURSDAY, MAY 29, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BENTIVOLIO).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
May 29, 2014.

I hereby appoint the Honorable KERRY L. BENTIVOLIO to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2014, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I am on the floor today to express my disappoint-

ment that my colleagues and I were prevented from offering an amendment to the NDAA dealing with the constitutional responsibility of Congress to declare war.

Like many Members of Congress, I had the opportunity to speak at events on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday on Memorial Day weekend. Every time I spoke, I mentioned my frustration that the McGovern-Jones amendment was not able to be brought to the floor for debate and a vote. However, I was pleased that ADAM SCHIFF's amendment to repeal the Authorization for Use of Military Force, which was passed by Congress in 2001, was at least brought up for a debate. However, I was disappointed that the Schiff amendment was defeated, because no President should have the authority to send men and women to war without action from Congress.

According to CRS, the AUMF has been invoked in 30 known instances by Presidents Bush and Obama for the purpose of deploying troops. This represents an abdication of our constitutional responsibility.

Yesterday I had the honor of visiting Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Mr. Speaker, I have beside me a poster of a triple amputee. This gentleman gave his arm and both legs for our country. Yesterday at Walter Reed, during my visit, I had the privilege of talking with several of our Nation's heroes who have lost limbs, double amputees and triple amputees.

Mr. Speaker, those lost limbs as well as other injuries, both physical and mental, are why I had veterans ap-

proach me at Memorial Day events to say that they agree that Afghanistan is not worth the blood that has been shed there. Furthermore, they agreed with me that Afghanistan is not worth America continuing to borrow money from foreign nations, driving up further the debt of our Nation to fund President Karzai's corrupt government when we have a multitude of problems and needs right here in America.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close my comments by quoting Pat Buchanan, and I believe this describes our situation in Afghanistan: "Is it not a symptom of senility to be borrowing from the world so that we can defend the world?" I am going to repeat that one more time. "Is it not a symptom of senility to be borrowing from the world so that we can defend the world?"

Mr. Speaker, we are a debtor nation. We can't even pay our bills without going into the international markets and borrowing money to pay last year's bills. It is time that this Congress understands that we need to come back to America and rebuild America. We need to be smart with our foreign policy. We need to be smart with our men and women in uniform.

And as I look at this poster one more time, Mr. Speaker, when I saw that 23-year-old young man from Camp Lejeune, which is in my district, yesterday and his father, who is probably about 50 or 51, and the young man has both legs gone and an arm, I looked in the eyes of the father, and what I saw was pain; what I saw was worry; what I saw was sorrow.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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We in this Congress need to follow our constitutional responsibility and never send our young men and women to war unless we debate it and we declare war on the floor of the House.

HONORING THE LIFE OF ARTIST THORNTON DIAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Alabama (Ms. SEWELL) for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor one of America's most prolific and self-taught artists, Mr. Thornton Dial of Bessemer, Alabama.

Today at the age of 86, Thornton Dial has lived, worked, and created art in Alabama for his entire life. From childhood, Dial was creating symbolically dense pieces of art by using castaway objects, anything he could find in his environment: pieces of wire, scrap metal, bones, tree roots. He used his environment to define his environment.

Dial's work provides a forceful and compelling narrative of the most insidious challenges and remarkable triumphs of African American history in the Deep South. His work contains layers of rich history and reflects on race and class struggles that he witnessed in the Deep South.

Dial rose to prominence in the 1990s while in his sixties through his large-scale assemblages, paintings that were made of scrap metal, pipes, very interesting visual interpretation of the history and politics that he saw around him.

Dial is described as having been one of the most amazing art biographies in art history. He is described as being a very quiet man, a listener who dressed impeccably. What he lacked in terms of formal education he more than made up for in his highly visual and historic vocabulary.

Dial's created brilliance is truly illuminating and inspiring. Dial has stayed in Alabama in the heart of the Seventh Congressional District to live and work his entire life. He was born in 1928 in Sumter County, Alabama. He was one of 12 children. And in childhood, he built his own toys because, as he said: We didn't have much.

Thornton began full-time farming at the age of 5. In his early teens, he was sent to live with his aunt in Bessemer, Alabama, where he attended Sloss Mining Camp. His peers made fun of him for his large size and for being "country." His teachers told him that he would never amount to much.

I want you to know that we in the Seventh Congressional District are extremely proud of Thornton Dial because we know that he really interpreted what he saw around him in the Deep South. He interpreted it in a very creative way, and only now is he gaining such preeminence for that form of art.

Dial never really made a living as an artist. He worked for over 30 years at

the Pullman Standard factory. Yes, he made boxcars for a living.

"People have fought for freedom all over the world," he said. "I try to show that struggle. It is a war to be fought. We are trying to win it."

In his time off from the Pullman factory, Dial would escape to his garage or backyard and create masterpieces out of whatever he could find. Out of fear that people would laugh at his art, he would bury his work. Later, he would dig it up and deconstruct it and reuse materials for new masterpieces.

Dial began to dedicate himself to his artwork in 1981. He founded Dial Metal Patterns, a garden furniture business, with his sons in 1983, after the Pullman Factory closed.

Dial's handmade designs were discovered by Lonnie Holley, a neighboring Black artist, in 1987. Holley brought Bill Arnett, an artist himself and a collector of African American art, from Atlanta to see Dial's work. Arnett helped him to get national attention about his art. The two finally, working together, agreed on a price for his first sculpture.

Initially, Dial offered Arnett the piece for \$20, and Arnett refused the low price. He said to Mr. Dial that this piece deserves more than \$20. They agreed on \$200. This was the first transaction that Mr. Dial had as an artist.

Dial's work has been the subject of exhibitions across this country. At the New Museum of contemporary art and the American Folk Art Museum in New York. His work can be found in more than 15 public collections, including those of, among others, the High Museum of Art in Atlanta and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. Many, many people now collect his art. An art form that was considered outside art now is considered world-class art. With no formal training and education, Dial's powerful artwork stands out in the world of highly degreed artists.

Dial continues to create art today, and this weekend he will be honored by his hometown of Bessemer, Alabama. He will be honored as a great American hero and a great American artist.

I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring this great, wonderful Alabama treasure, Thornton Dial.

VA SCANDAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PERRY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring awareness to the outrageous, the almost unimaginable findings from the ongoing VA inspector general's review of the Phoenix Health Care System and now some two dozen other facilities.

The stated VHA goal is a 14-day wait for a first-time primary care appointment—14 days, 2 weeks. It is a little much for some, but it seems appropriate, reasonable for many. That is their goal. Whether I agree with it or not, that is their goal.

However, I am going to read from the executive summary of the inspector general's allegations:

"Allegations at the Phoenix HCS include gross mismanagement of VA resources and criminal misconduct by VA senior hospital leadership, creating systemic patient safety issues and possible wrongful deaths. While our work is not complete, we have substantiated that significant delays in access to care negatively impacted the quality of care at this medical facility."

Mr. Speaker, that is breathtaking. That is breathtaking. This is our Federal Government.

Falsified data reported last year by Phoenix HCS showed veterans waited, on average, 24 days for their first primary care appointment. Falsified data said that they waited an average of 24 days; however, the recent IG report found that veterans actually waited, on average, 115 days for their first primary care appointment, with approximately 84 percent of those waiting more than 14 days, which was the stated goal.

Mr. Speaker, 115 days for their first appointment. That is the appointment where you go talk to the doctor and you tell him what is wrong or what you think is wrong and he starts making an assessment. That is not treatment. That is just an appointment with the doctor. Mr. Speaker, 115 days.

To put it another way, VA management at Phoenix HCS met 16 percent of its wait time goal, and those folks still received bonuses for that action. The folks that do the work got a bonus for meeting 16 percent of their goal.

When people say to you, as a Representative, there are things wrong with the Federal Government, Mr. Speaker, this is what is wrong with the Federal Government. Even after cooking the books, the stated goal of an average 14-day wait time was not met. Even after that.

Now, I was proud to vote for Chairman MILLER's VA Accountability Act last week, but it is a shame—I don't know what it is—that it takes an act of Congress to fire somebody in the Federal Government. If you are the Secretary and you find somebody that has done something wrong—and in these cases, potentially criminal—and you can't fire them, what is going on here?

Now, this is not a new circumstance. We have actually known about it for years. Republicans—and I have been here a year and a half—and, I imagine, Democrats have been complaining for years about this because they see it in their districts. But nothing has been done. And some will say, well, Congress hasn't appropriated the right money. Three times the amount of money since 2001 has gone to the VA for care—for care. Three times it has been increased.

□ 1015

Mr. Speaker, where the President says he has got a pen and a phone, I beseech you—I beseech him to call up a